

Postcards from Iraq

Challenging . . . but rewarding

By Danielle Billings, Project Manager

Gulf Region Division South District, Tallil Air Base, Iraq

(Deployed from the St. Louis District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)

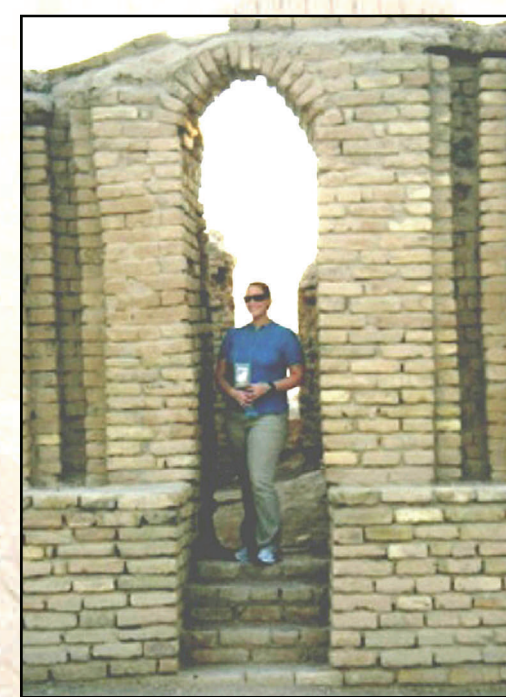


I began working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a Program Analyst in the St. Louis District in 2005, after graduating with a degree in International Business. I worked as a Student Cooperative Educational Program Employee (SCEP) in a Support for Others Program Analyst role, and later a Civil Works Program Analyst, while working towards a MBA in Finance. In 2007, I took on an additional duty as the Mississippi Valley Division (MVD) Regional P2 Coordinator before deciding in July that I was ready for something different.

I had spoken with a co-worker who had deployed to the Gulf Region North District and the former Deputy Commander in St. Louis who had deployed to the Gulf Region South District before deciding that Iraq didn't sound so bad. With my MBA program completed and the positive feedback I received, I decided to take the plunge. I expected the tour to be challenging - with the work schedule, environment, and a new group of people - but it turned out that this experience has been one of the most rewarding things I have ever done.

I have been in Iraq for a year now and have made some close friends while deployed. I have also learned about Iraqi culture and have a new appreciation for the Iraqi people. Our mission is crucial to allowing Iraqis to stand on their own and I wish that more people would volunteer to support this effort. Deploying to support GWOT may not sound like it's a lot of fun but I can honestly say that I am happy that I made this decision. For anyone who is considering whether or not to come to Iraq, I would highly recommend it and cannot say enough about all of the wonderful things my tour to Iraq has brought. Coming over here has helped me grow both personally and professionally and I would not trade this experience for the world.

I would like to thank my family and friends who have been there to support me and the co-workers with whom I have had the opportunity to serve. It isn't always easy to be away from home but it most certainly has been enjoyable!



Danielle Billings from St. Louis visited the ancient city of Ur located at Tallil Air Base in southern Iraq and viewed one the world's oldest arches.



Senior staff including Project Manager Danielle Billings (front row, third from left) gather outside GRS headquarters at Tallil Air Base in southern Iraq.



Danielle Billings says hello to some Iraqi youngsters